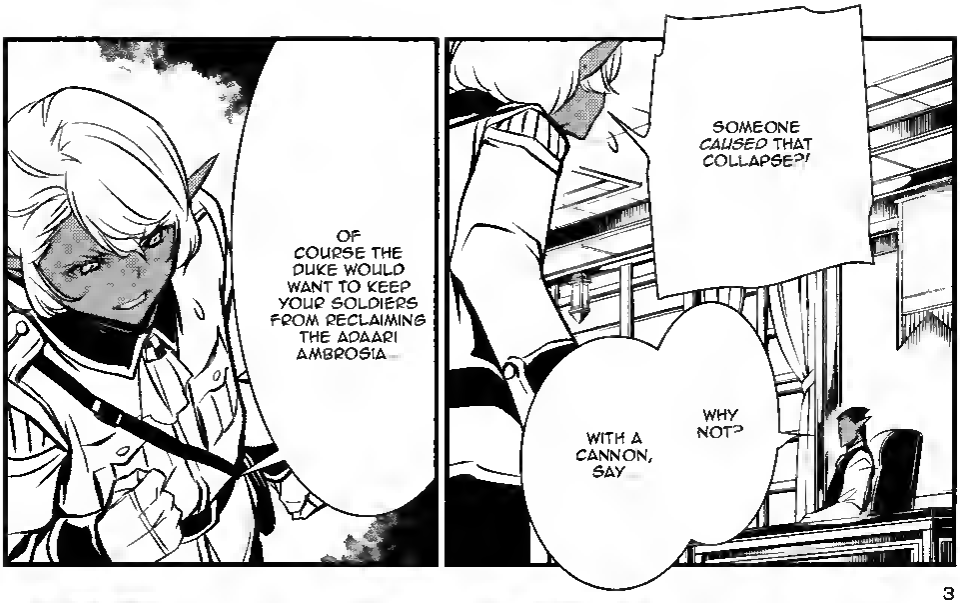
Chapter 6: Storm the Fortress!

Datra
The Dhalani Governor-General's palace
"WIPED OUT"?
AS IN ALL OF THEM?
YES
THERE ARE SOME DETAILS I HAVE YET TO CONFIRM...
...BUT IT APPEARS THEY WERE STRUCK BY A SUDDEN ROCKFALL ON THE HIGH PASS
2
A ROCK-FALL WITH IMPECCABLE TIMING, THEN...
...OR AN AMBUSH.
AN... AMBUSH, SIR?


OF COURSE THE DUKE WOULD WANT TO KEEP YOUR SOLDIERS FROM RECLAIMING THE ADAARI AMBROSIA...
SOMEONE CAUSED THAT COLLAPSE?!
WHY NOT?
WITH A CANNON, SAY...

NOTE: BLACK BACKGROUND MEANS IT HAPPENED EARLIER.

STOP THIS AT ONCE!
SURIYAH IS DUKE GAZURO'S TERRITORY!
DO YOU HAVE LEAVE TO OPERATE HERE?!
WHO'S YOUR COMMANDER?!
I'M ON A CRUCIAL MISSION GIVEN TO ME BY GOVERNOR-GENERAL BRED REGAN, AND YOU'RE INTERFERING!
STAND DOWN, FOOL!
HO?
shove
THUD

AND HE *DARES* SEND HIS LACKEYS TO DISTURB THE PEACE IN THE TERRITORY OF HIS BETTER?!
REGAN MAY BE THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, BUT HIS BLOOD IS STILL ONLY THAT OF A JUMPED-UP PEASANT!
DUKE GAZURO.
YOU MAY LEAVE HER IN MY CARE.
WELL DONE, LIEU-TENANT
WELL DONE INDEED!
AH...
AND *THIS* WOULD BE THE MUCH RUMORED AMBROSIA...

THE DUKE KNEW ABOUT THE AMBROSIA
AND WAS READY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION
HE TOOK HER RIGHT OUT OF MY HANDS SIR
DUKE GAZURO
"THE PIG"
snip
I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS RATHER UNFITTING
PIGS ARE QUITE CLEVER ANIMALS
HAVE YOU HEARD?
FOR ALL HIS NOBLE LINEAGE, THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL HIM BEHIND HIS BACK
SIR...
DON'T FRET
OUR ORDER TO CAPTURE THE AMBROSIA HASN'T CHANGED, AND NEITHER HAS MY PLAN
SIR...
YOU'VE FORESEEN THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS WOULD HAPPEN?!

LET'S JUST SAY IT DIDN'T SURPRISE ME
REST ASSURED, THE PIG WILL BE HUMBLED AND THE AMBROSIA WILL BE BACK WITH US
YES, SIR!
shine
sparkle
YOUR GRACE...
WE ARE DEEPLY HONORED TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TODAY!
IT IS SUCH A PLEASURE TO FINALLY MEET YOU!
OH, INDEED!
Ahahaha!

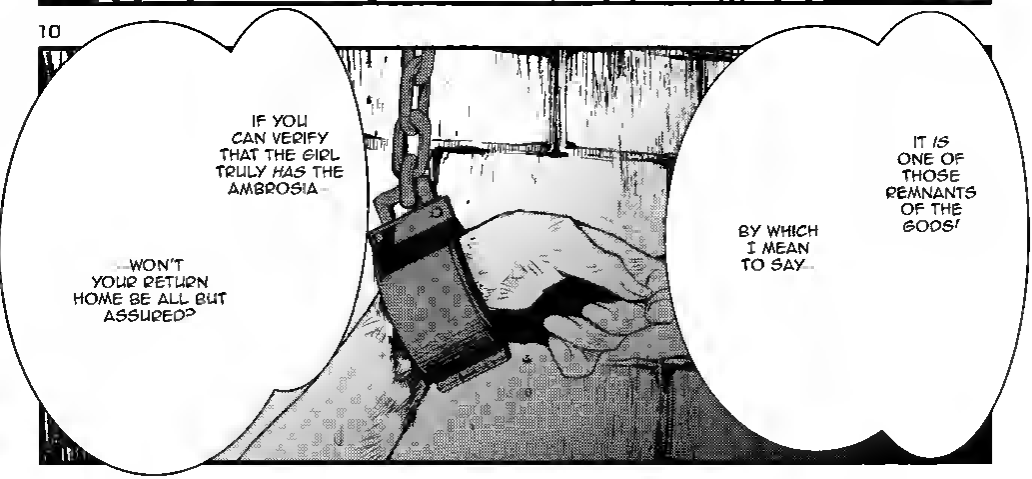
creak
LOOM
sigh...

NO!
HOW MANY TIMES?!
HOW MANY?!
WHAP
KYAA!

GHK!
I SHOW YOU, AND I TELL YOU, AND I TEACH YOU...
AND STILL YOU'RE NOTHING MORE THAN COUNTRY GIRLS!
I'M... I'M SORRY
WHAT WAS THAT VULGAR SOUND?!
A REAL LADY OF THE GRAND CITY WOULD NEVER LAUGH LIKE THAT!
NEVER!
9
4
I/ DON'T! CARE!
KRAK
YOUR GRACE...
TAKE CARE, OR YOU'LL BREAK THESE GIRLS AS WELL
AAAH...!
WHY?!
I'M A DUKE!
I'M A GAZURO!
SO WHY AM I STILL STUCK HERE, LEFT TO SWELTER IN THIS INFERNAL LAND OF IDIOTS AND SAVAGES...
...SO FAR FROM MY BELOVED HOME?!
huff
huff
hff

I'VE BEEN SENT AWAY FROM THE LIGHTS OF MY BEAUTIFUL CITY TO SEARCH FOR REMNANTS OF—
—FORGOTTEN GODS IN THE WILDERNESS!
YET HERE ON THE FRONTIER, THERE'S NEITHER!
MORE-OVER—
—DO WE NOT LIVE IN THE AGE OF SCIENCE?
OF PROGRESS?!

THE AMBROSIA, THEN—
IS IT NOT THE VERY THING YOU WERE SENT HERE TO PROCURE?
BUT YOUR GRACE—


IF YOU CAN VERIFY THAT THE GIRL TRULY HAS THE AMBROSIA—
—WON'T YOUR RETURN HOME BE ALL BUT ASSURED?
IT IS ONE OF THOSE REMNANTS OF THE GODS!
BY WHICH I MEAN TO SAY—

I TOLD HER SHE'S TOO STUBBORN FOR HER OWN GOOD...
OF COURSE!
BUT SHE DEFIES ME STILL.
SHE REFUSES TO BRING OUT THE AMBROSIA WITHIN HER
HM...
SHE'S HOLDING OUT FOR HELP SHE SURELY KNOWS WON'T COME.
AND I THINK MY PATIENCE IS AT AN END.
PERHAPS IT IS TIME TO PUT FORTH A MORE FORCEFUL ARGUMENT.
break

rustle

THEY'VE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF GUARDS

IF WE SHOW SO MUCH AS HALF A NOSE...
...THEY'LL SWARM LIKE BEES.
THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
THEIR NUMBER DOESN'T MATTER.

REPORTING IN!

THE FIRST GROUP...
...IS WAITING FOR YOUR COMMAND

AND THE SECOND GROUP...
...IS IN POSITION BEHIND THE ROCKS

I'VE NEVER TAKEN PART IN ANYTHING EVEN REMOTELY LIKE IT.
ARE YOU *CERTAIN* THIS IS HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED?
MAJOR, I MUST SAY, THIS PLAN OF YOURS...
YES.
WELL, THEN
EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN PLACE, MAJOR.

OF COURSE!

BELIEVE ME WHEN I SAY THE PLAN WILL WORK...
...AND WE WILL TAKE THE FORTRESS!

YES!
YEAH!
ME...
ME TOO!
I KNOW WE'LL PULL THIS OFF!
WE'LL WIN!
I CAN FEEL IT!

15

WELL, I SAID IT
NOW I JUST HAVE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN...
THE PLAN WILL WORK, HUH?

SO THE LEAST I CAN DO IS LESSEN THEIR FEARS
THESE PEOPLE WILL RISE UP AND RISK THEIR LIVES
WHEN I GIVE THE COMMAND

I MEAN, WE GET A LOT OF ELDERLY CUSTOMERS, AND I DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE SELLING THESE EXPENSIVE THINGS THAT I DON'T EVEN—
BUT SIR—
LISTEN, KAI
YOU'RE BEING WAY TOO PASSIVE
YOU'VE GOTTA PUT MORE FIRE IN YOUR PITCHES!
ARE YOU KIDDING ME?! DON'T BE STUPID!
LOOK, PEOPLE COME HERE LOOKING TO BUY SOMETHING, RIGHT?
THEY WANT YOU TO SELL THEM SOMETHING
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO—
—IS PUT SOME CONFIDENCE IN YOUR VOICE AND PUSH THIS INTO THEIR ARMS!
BESIDES, IT'S A PERFECTLY FINE PRODUCT!
JUST SELL WITH CONVICTION AND PEOPLE WILL BUY IT, GUARANTEED!

IF YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE SOLD ON WHATEVER YOU'RE PUSHING, EVEN IF YOU KNOW IT'S JUST SOME DODGY PIECE OF SHIT, PEOPLE WILL WANT TO BELIEVE YOU.
HOW MANY JOBS AGO WAS THAT ONE...?
ANYWAY, THAT GUY WAS EASILY THE SLIMIEST LIAR I'VE EVER MET.
...BUT WHAT HE SAID BACK THEN WAS THE COLD TRUTH.
17
IF YOU DON'T SPEAK AND ACT WITH CONFIDENCE, PEOPLE WON'T BUY WHAT YOU'RE SELLING
SO MAKE YOURSELF CONFIDENT, EVEN IF YOU BASE IT ON NOTHING AT ALL.
...AND REMOVE ALL TRACES OF DOUBT IN YOUR VOICE, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO TELL THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU...

...TO FIGHT FOR THEIR LIVES!
18
GROUP ONE!
BEGIN THE OPERATION!!
KNK

FLING
HUHP!
TOK
POK
KABOOM
GA-

WHAT THE HELL?!
WE'RE BEING SHELLED?!
WHOOM!!
BOOM!!
KABOOM!!

UNDER FIRE?!
IT SEEMS WE'RE UNDER FIRE!
YOUR GRACE, IT—
BOOM!!
RUMBLE
WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE?!

SO FAR SO GOOD

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS THE STRATEGY HERE?
FIRST OF ALL
WE'LL SPLIT OUR FORCE INTO THREE GROUPS
ONE GROUP WILL BE TO THE EAST OF THE FORTRESS
ONE GROUP WILL BE TO THE SOUTH, NEAR THE BRIDGE
AND ONE GROUP WILL BE TO THE WEST, ON THE OPPOSITE SHORE.
SO WE'RE SPREADING OUT?
AT A GLANCE THAT DOES SEEM RATHER RISKY, SIR.
WHY NOT USE THE DYNAMITE AND BREACH THE WALLS?
NO
THOSE WALLS ARE FAR STURDIER THAN THESE BRITTLE CLIFFS.
THE DYNAMITE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO ENOUGH DAMAGE
THEN WHAT DO WE DO?

ARAN
IF YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF GUARDING A CASTLE AND SUDDENLY THERE ARE EXPLOSIONS ON ONE SIDE
HOW WOULD YOU REACT?
WELL...
I'D HAVE TO ASSUME WE WERE BEING SHELLED BY A SIEGE CANNON
SO...
THAT'S THE FIRST STEP IN OUR STRATEGY
WE'LL THROW DYNAMITE OVER THE WALL
AND MAKE THEM BELIEVE THEY'RE UNDER SIEGE
QUIET THAT CANNON!
EAST!
SOLDIERS, TO THE EAST WALL!
YES, LORD!
TOF
TOF
TOF
BOOM
BOOM

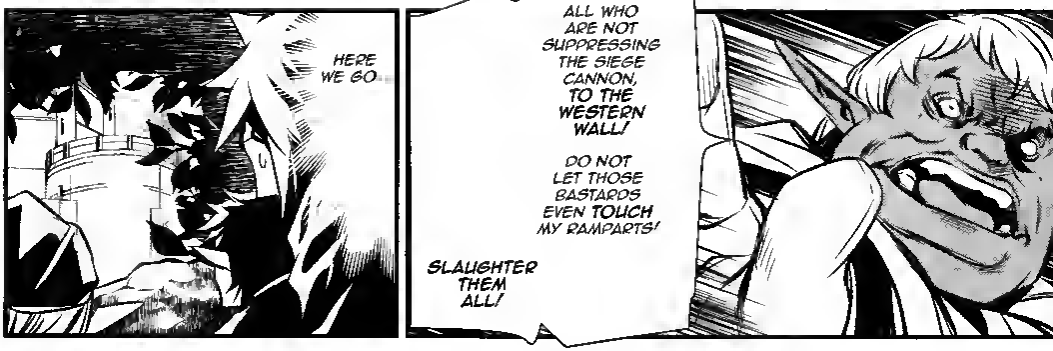
GAAH!
ZING
SPAK
KRAK
THEY'RE SHOOTING!
THEY'RE SHOOTING AT US!
SEVERAL GUARDS HAVE MOVED TO THE EASTERN WALL!
BAM
BLAM BLAM
ALL RIGHT!
THEY TOOK THE BAIT.
BANG
NOW THE WESTERN WALL IS ALL BUT UN-GUARDED
SO NOW

BAM
BLAM
BLAM
BAM
SECOND GROUP, ENGAGE!

ENEMIES!
AH?!
ENEMIES TO THE WEST!
KRAK

MAJOR, THAT AREA HAS ONLY A COUPLE OF GOOD ROCKS TO TAKE COVER BEHIND
THE MEN WOULD HAVE TO MAKE A LONG CHARGE OVER FLAT TERRAIN
IT'D BE SUICIDE!
AND EVEN IF THEY COULD REACH THE WALL, YOU SAY THE DYNAMITE WON'T WORK...
NOW THAT THE ENEMY'S ATTENTION IS FIXED ON THE EASTERN WALL...
THE WESTERN GROUP WILL ATTACK
THIS IS THE SECOND STEP OF THE PLAN
AS I SAID EARLIER
MAKING IT SEEM LIKE WE'RE ATTACKING FROM THE WEST IS ANOTHER...
THE "SHELLING" IS ONE DECOY.
GROUP TWO WON'T REALLY CHARGE, JUST SHOW THEMSELVES TO DRAW ATTENTION.
A, A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF INFANTRY!
THE ENEMY IS ATTACKING FROM THE WEST!
WHAT IS IT NOW?!
YOUR GRACE!

BUT IT WON'T WORK!
...WHILE THE ENEMY TRIES TO BREACH THE WALLS TO THE WEST!
IT'S DRAWING US TO THE EAST SIDE!
THE SHELLING IS A DECOY!
OH?
OH, I SEE...
NOW I CAN READ YOU...


HERE WE GO...
ALL WHO ARE NOT SUPPRESSING THE SIEGE CANNON, TO THE WESTERN WALL!
DO NOT LET THOSE BASTARDS EVEN TOUCH MY RAMPARTS!
SLAUGHTER THEM ALL!

THEY'RE MOVING!

AND NOW...
THE GATE'S ONLY GUARDED BY TWO SOLDIERS!
THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO BREAK THROUGH!
I'M GOING IN!
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME!
flap

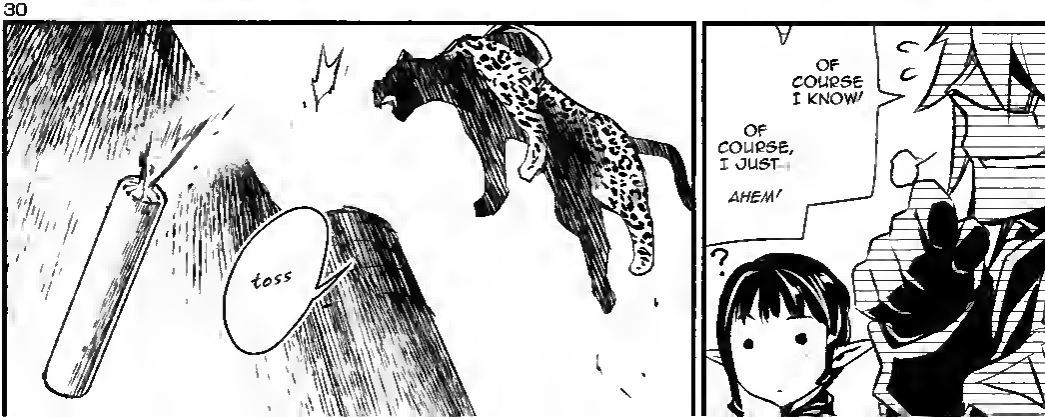
RUH-
RIIIGHT
TURN!
TROMP

I'M HELPING THE PRINCESS!
DON'T THANK ME.
THIS IS WHERE THE DANGEROUS PART BEGINS.
BE CAREFUL.
AND THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS

THEN I'M COUNTING ON YOU...
...NIA.

pad
WHAT THE...
IS THAT A LEOPARD?!
SSSSSSS
BLAM
29
IT'S...
IT'S ONE OF THOSE BEAST PEOPLE!
BAM
DASH

ZING
TOK
AMAZING!
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE IT!
A CELIAN-THROPE THAT CAN ANIMALIZE SO WELL...
IT'S PERFECT!
IS IT THAT RARE?
IS IT
MAJOR, ARE YOU JOKING?
THE COMPLETE-NESS OF A CELIANTHROPE'S SHIFTING DEPENDS ON BLOOD PURITY.
BLOOD THIS PURE IS EXTREMELY RARE.
HOW DON'T YOU KNOW THAT?!


toss
OF COURSE I KNOW!
OF COURSE, I JUST...
AHEM!
?

BOOM
GAH!
?!
TOF
CRONK
KHOOM

BRRRRRRRRRRR
ALL RIGHT, BOYS!
THE WOOING'S DONE, HER LEGS ARE WIDE OPEN!
TIME TO SHOW HER WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF!
THE GATE'S UP!
YEAAAH!!

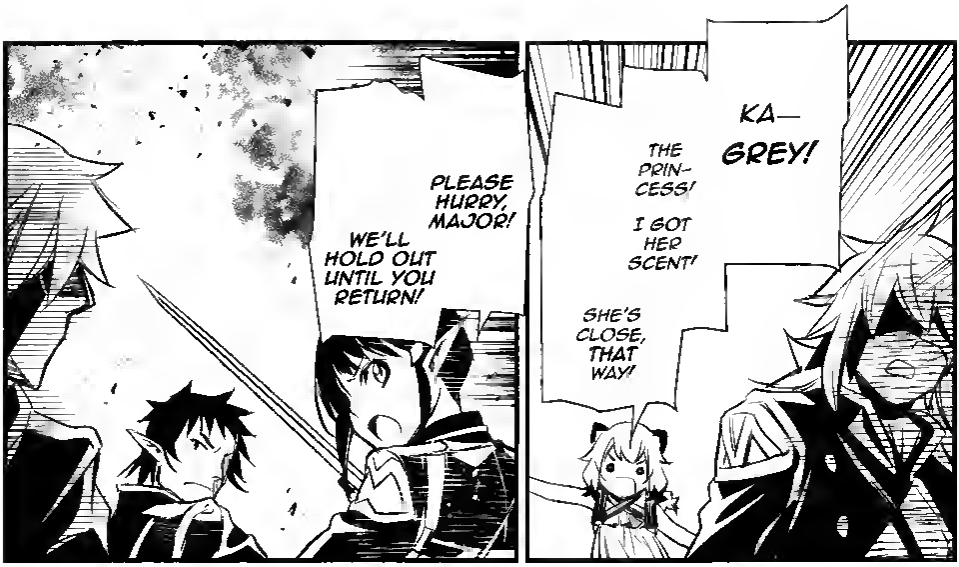
CHARGE!
WE'RE INSIDE! THIS IS WHERE WE WIN, OR, WHERE IT ALL FALLS APART

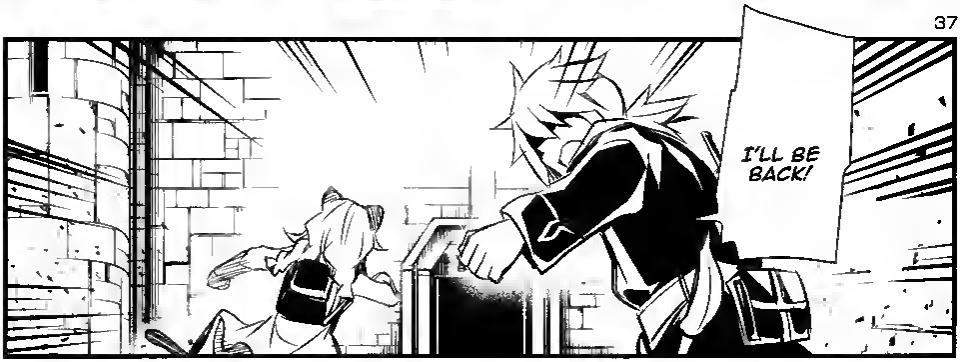
SO WE'RE BLUFFING TO THE EAST AND TO THE WEST!
SO WE CAN BREAK THROUGH THE FRONT GATE!
HOLD ON...
IF WE USE THIS PLAN...
...TOO MANY OF OUR MEN WILL BE KEEPING THE ENEMY BUSY ON THE WALLS.
OUR CHARGE THROUGH THE GATE WILL BE SEVERELY THINNED OUT
ONCE THE ENEMY TURNS TO FACE US, WE'LL BE CRUSHED!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT
JUST HELP ME RUSH TO THE ADAARI PRINCESS
AND REGARDLESS OF NUMBERS, OUR VICTORY WILL BE SECURED.
IF I MAY, SIR...
...I THINK I'M GOING TO NEED A FEW MORE DETAILS...
COULD IT BE...
MAJOR... DO YOU HAVE ANOTHER SECRET WEAPON?!
LIKE THE DYNAMITE?!
IN A WAY.
ONLY IT'S FAR MORE POWERFUL, LIEUTENANT...
...AND FAR MORE FEARSOME.

BLAM
CLANG
BAM
THOK
RAAAH!
BAM

SHIT!
SHIT, SHIT, SHIT!
I DO NOT HAVE THE NERVES FOR THIS!
MAJOR, BEHIND YOU!
?!

SLASH
36
STAY WITH ME!
I'LL SHIELD YOU!
MAJOR, YOU MUSTN'T PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER WHILE YOU'RE RECUPERATING FROM A HEAD WOUND!
THAT—
WOULD BE HELPFUL, YES.


PLEASE HURRY, MAJOR!
WE'LL HOLD OUT UNTIL YOU RETURN!
KA—
GREY!
THE PRIN-CESS!
I GOT HER SCENT!
SHE'S CLOSE, THAT WAY!


I'LL BE BACK!

NO...
COULD IT BE ?
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
ALL THAT NOISE AND COMMOTION

...EVEN THOUGH I KNOW NO ONE WILL COME.

NO.
I KEEP HOPING FOR HELP...

HALT!
WHO GOES?!
IDENTIFHAAA
THUD
I'LL STAY HERE!
GO GET THE PRINCESS!

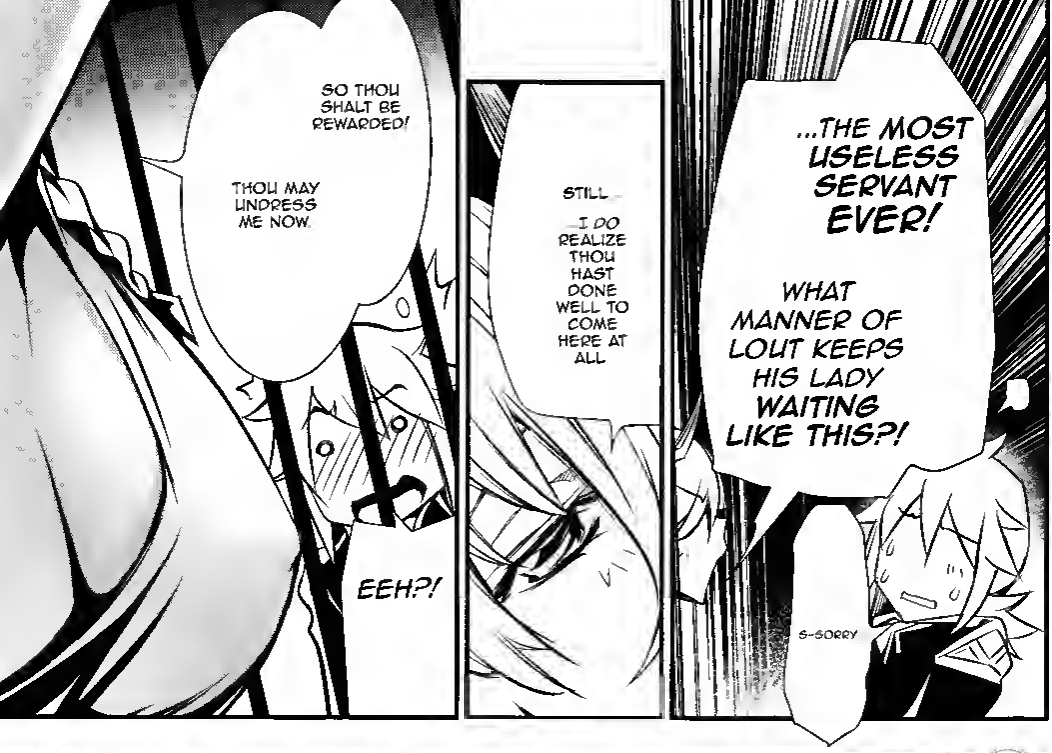
BUT...
CAN IT BE TRUE...?
GOT IT!

haah
SORRY
haah
SORRY
I'M LATE!
haah
40
WHY ?
?
sob

WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE FAR AWAY, SOMEWHERE SAFE!
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS!
I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE CAUGHT UP IN ALL THIS—
SAKURA

SAKURA, I MADE A PROMISE.
TO GREY.
I SWORE I'D BECOME STRONGER SO I CAN PROTECT YOU.
SO YOU'RE WRONG.
THIS IS MY FIGHT...
...JUST AS MUCH AS IT IS YOURS.

WELL...
OH, KAI...
YOU'RE SUCH A FOOL...
42
NO...
THOU ART FAR MORE THAN A MERE FOOL
shimmer
THOU ART AN IDIOT FOR THE AGES
INDEED, THOU ART...


...THE MOST USELESS SERVANT EVER!
WHAT MANNER OF LOUT KEEPS HIS LADY WAITING LIKE THIS?!
S-SORRY
STILL...
...I DO REALIZE THOU HAST DONE WELL TO COME HERE AT ALL
SO THOU SHALT BE REWARDED!
THOU MAY UNDRESS ME NOW.
EEH?!

I WOULD DO IT MYSELF, BUT AS THOU MAY HAVE SURMISED...
...I AM ENTIRELY AT THY MERCY...
NNGH

YOUTHFUL FUMBLING HAS ITS CHARMS, YOUNG KAI...
...BUT DO HURRY
MY BREASTS ALL BUT ACHE
FOR THE GENTLE TOUCH OF THY LIPS

SO
...MY LITTLE SERVANT
IN ME I CARRY THE MIGHT OF THE GODS
Y...
YES!
THEN DRINK OF ME AND BE CURSED
I ASK THEE NOW
ART THOU WILLING TO TASTE THIS POWER?
push
A—
SP!

Aaaaahh...!

SHINJU NO NECTAR
NECTAR OF DHARANI

NEXT:
CHAPTER 7

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